United Nations A/C.4/57/SR.1

General Assembly
Fifty-seventh session
Official Records

Distr.: General
20 December 2002
English
Original: Russian

Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 1st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 26 September 2002, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Maitland ..... (South Africa)

Contents

Election of officers

Organization of work

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Election of officers

1. **The Chairman** said that, in keeping with the decisions to improve the efficiency and revitalization of the General Assembly, and given that agreement had been reached among regional groups on the nomination of candidates for the posts of Vice-Chairmen and Rapporteur, he took it that the Committee wished to dispense with the nominations and elect the Vice-Chairmen and Rapporteur by acclamation.

2. *Ms. Hughes Ferrari (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), Ms. Price (Canada) and Mr. Al-Otaibi (Kuwait) were elected Vice-Chairmen and Mr. Droba (Slovakia) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.*

Organization of work (A/C.4/57/1; A/C.4/57/L.1; A/C.4/57/INF/1)

3. **The Chairman** drew the attention of the members of the Committee to document A/C.4/57/1, which contained a letter addressed to him from the President of the General Assembly informing him that the General Assembly had decided to allocate 14 agenda items to the Fourth Committee for its consideration. The Committee also had before it document A/C.4/55/L.1 containing the Committee's programme of work and timetable which he had prepared in accordance with the decisions of the General Assembly.

4. In order to make full use of the conference services made available to the Committee, he would convene and adjourn meetings punctually. During the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, owing to the late start and early adjournment of meetings, the Committee had lost 27 hours and 5 minutes of the time allocated to it; that meant a utilization factor of 62 per cent, which was below the benchmark figure of 80 per cent established by the Committee on Conferences. It was in the interests of all members to improve on that record.

5. Committee meetings would be convened only when there were sufficient delegations inscribed on the list of speakers. That would make it possible, with sufficient warning, to redeploy resources allocated to cancelled meetings to service other meetings.

6. The General Assembly had decided to continue its practice of departing from the requirement of a quorum in order for a meeting to be declared open and for debate to begin. That did not, however, involve any permanent change to rules 67 and 108 of the rules of procedure.

7. On questions of procedure and organization of work, the Special Committee would comply strictly with paragraphs 6 to 10, 12, 17 and 32 of General Assembly decision 34/401 (A/520/Rev.15, annex VI). In view of the number of agenda items allocated for the Committee's consideration and the limited number of meetings available to it, he suggested that the length of statements in the general debates should not exceed 10 minutes, or 15 minutes when a statement was made on behalf of a group of delegations. Statements in exercise of the right of reply, explanations of vote and statements on points of order should be limited to five minutes.

8. In addition to the preparation of summary records of meetings of the Fourth Committee, the practice would be retained whereby the Committee might, on specific request, obtain full or partial transcriptions of some of its meetings; that would not entail any extrabudgetary expenses.

9. In accordance with paragraph 5 of its resolution 48/264, the General Assembly urged Member States to exercise restraint in making proposals requesting new reports of the Secretary-General.

10. Delegations were also urged to respect set deadlines and to submit draft resolutions that might have programme budget implications as early as possible, so that the Secretariat would have sufficient time to prepare estimates. It should be recalled that the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee needed adequate time to review the programme budget implications of a draft resolution before the General Assembly could take action.

11. Delegations should submit draft resolutions, draft decisions and amendments, as well as lists of sponsors, in writing to the Secretariat in order to ensure accuracy and avoid any misunderstanding. Requests for the use of conference rooms for group meetings should also be submitted in writing at the earliest opportunity. At the current session, the Committee had been allocated an additional agenda item: "Election of the officers of the Main Committees" (item 5). He suggested, in keeping with recent decisions of the General Assembly, that the Committee should consider the item in June or July

2003, some three months before the opening of the next session.

12. *It was so decided.*

13. **The Chairman** said he took it that the Committee approved the programme of work and timetable contained in document A/C.4/57/L.1.

14. *It was so decided.*

15. **The Chairman** said that the General Assembly had decided that bodies and individuals having an interest in agenda item 39, "Question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)", would be heard in the Fourth Committee during consideration of that item in plenary meeting.

16. With regard to agenda item 75, "International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space", he suggested that as in previous sessions, the Committee should constitute an open-ended working group presided over by the delegation of Chile to prepare a draft resolution on the item.

17. *It was so decided.*

18. **The Chairman** said that there would be one general debate covering agenda items 19, 80, 81, 82 and 12, and 83 on decolonization together, on the understanding that draft resolutions and/or draft decisions would be considered separately. At its previous sessions, the Committee had considered the chapter of the report of the Special Committee on Decolonization relating to military activities in Non-Self-Governing Territories in conjunction with the item "Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories" (item 81). He took it that the Committee wished to follow the same procedure at the current session.

19. *It was so decided.*

20. **The Chairman** said that the representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories and petitioners would be heard as early as possible during the Committee's consideration of the relevant agenda items.

21. He also drew attention to document A/C.4/57/INF/1 containing a list of documents before the Fourth Committee. That list would be updated as appropriate.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.